

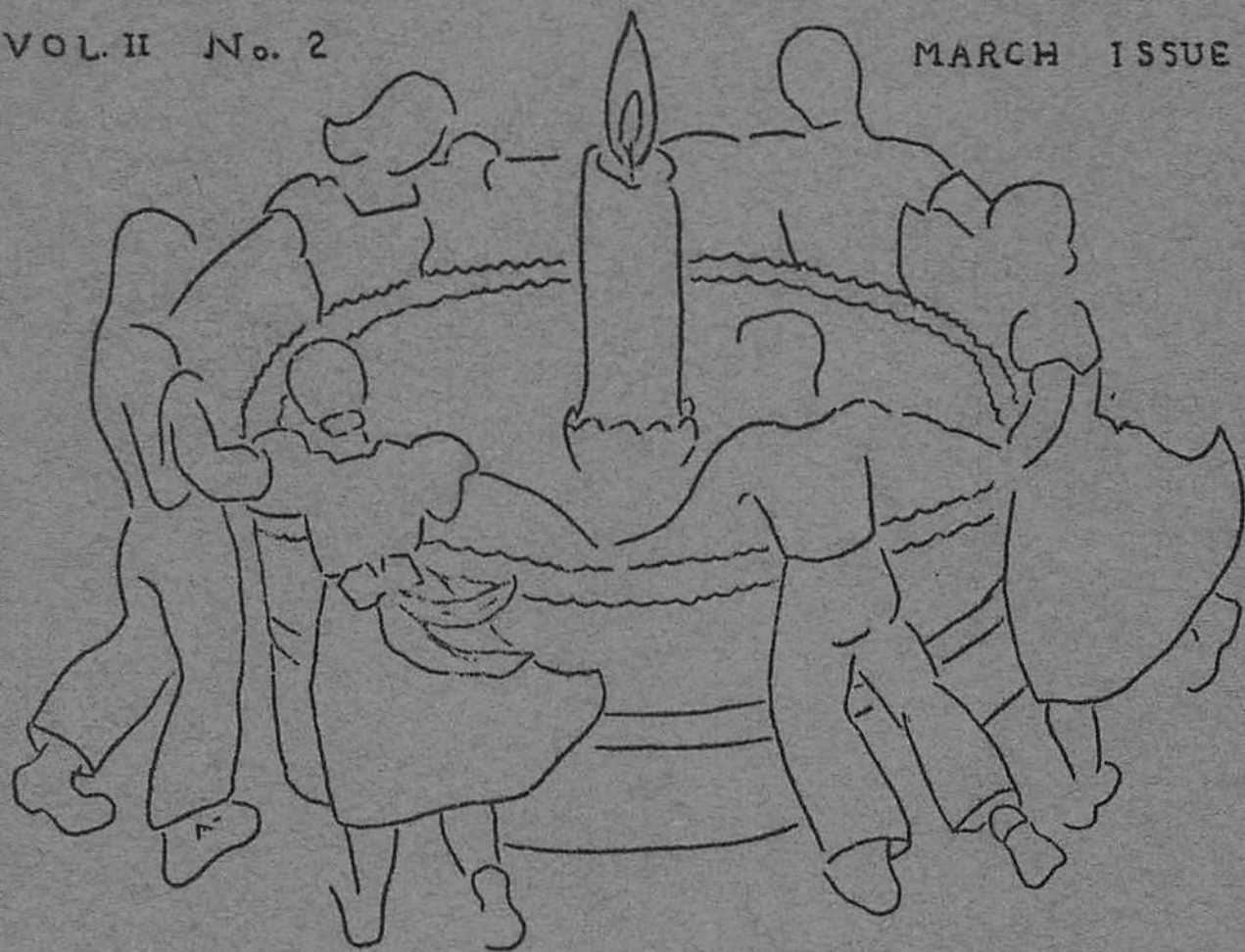
*Anniversary
Issue!*

FRAMENALE

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE

VOL. II No. 2

MARCH ISSUE



AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP
MARGOT MAYO
LEADER



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"PROMENADE"

Official organ of the American Square Dance Group.
"The purposes of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with all who entertain similar views."

A.S.D.G. Constitution.

"Promenade" is published ten times a year, with one summer edition.

SUBSCRIPTION

\$1.00.....yearly
.15...single mailed copy

BIRTHDAY

This past year has slipped by so quickly that our first birthday caught up with us and we didn't even realize it! Having now put one year of our publishing life behind us, we now purpose to spend a little space discussing "Promenade" and what are our hopes for it.

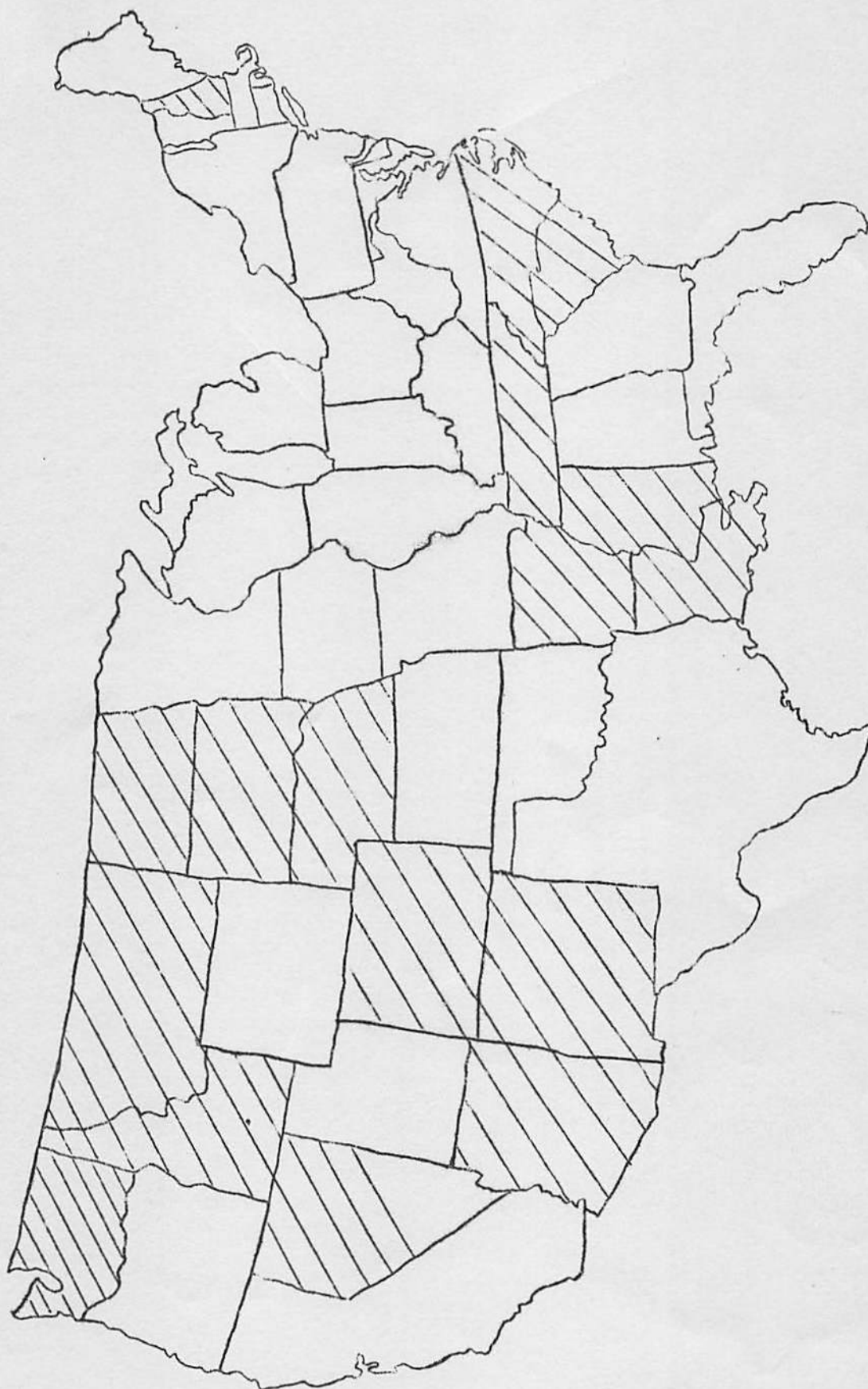
In the first place, when the idea of "Promenade" was born, we thought of it as a magazine for the members of our Group only. Today, without the benefit of publicity campaigns, our little pamphlet has grown to a point where there are but few States in the Union not subscribing to it. (See next page.) All this has, of course, increased the responsibility to a point never imagined when we first birthed this "Brain Child". Had we realized what we were letting ourselves in for, there is grave doubt that we would have ever set off on our career so blithely!

It seems wise to talk over with you what we want to get from our magazine. First let us say that you have given us many ideas -- in both "brick" and "bouquet" form -- which have enhanced "Promenade". We want to give our readers, many of whom are teachers of dance, music, physical education, authentic as well as usable and interesting material. We try to make the various departments -- Dials and Discs, Book Review, Sings, Dances, Notes of Interest, special articles, and the like -- satisfy this need.

With each issue of "Promenade" we learn more about the standards we have set for ourselves, and we hope, more about the best way to achieve those standards. In some cases our efforts to maintain those standards have forced us to say some unkind things about our dear and sincere friends. We have, perhaps, been unnecessarily harsh in our comments at times; though it sound prim, we must stick to our ideals of what constitutes true folk material.

And we hope to make "Promenade" provocative -- of your interest and support. We do hope that you will find time to write in your suggestions, criticisms, and even contributions of articles, notes, etc.

SHADED AREAS REPRESENT STATES NOT RECEIVING "PROMENADE"
CLEAR AREAS REPRESENT STATES SUBSCRIBING TO "PROMENADE"



SQUARE DANCING IN CANADA

When Saturday night rolled around I headed for Sovereign Hall on Dovercourt Road in Toronto, for some square dancing. I had been told they had a mighty good caller up there, one of the best in Ontario Province.

Outside the hall in bold letters were these words: "Milt Abrahams calling here tonight - Music furnished by the Century Boys." Inside I found about two hundred people who appeared to be having a very enjoyable time. There were old couples, young people and middle-aged folk who danced side by side in the same set. I noticed a spry old man who was dancing with one of the young girls. He was putting in a few extra shuffles and cavorting around like a twenty year old. Afterwards I sat down in a corner of the hall for a chat with him. He told me that he had been square dancing for fifty nine years in the neighborhood. He used to do some calling before he lost his front teeth...always liked "Little Brown Jug", "Girl I Left Behind Me", "Darling Nellie Gray" and quite a number of others.

As my new friend watched the dancers promenading and turning on the floor, he smiled and said, "They're just like one great big family having a fine time. We don't allow drinking here, or anything to disturb our good time. If one begins to act up, we refund his money and show him to the door. Smoking? No smoking on the dance floor. You know a woman can't enjoy dancin' with a hall filled with smoke." At this moment the orchestra struck up the "British Grenadiers" and my friend told me that he just had to get a partner, for Milt was going to call the "String Dance". The next moment he was lost in the crowd. Five minutes later I noticed him in one of the head sets with a young and attractive partner, of course. But before he went, I learned that he was seventy-five years of age and was looking forward to quite a few years of dancing with old favorites.

Immediately afterwards the orchestra struck up "Life on the Ocean Wave" and the caller announced that the next dance would be the "Bride and Groom". Then I heard the calls coming through the loud-speaker:

"First couple out to the right of the room,
The groom go round the bride and the bride go round
the groom,
The bride go round the bride and the groom go round
the groom."

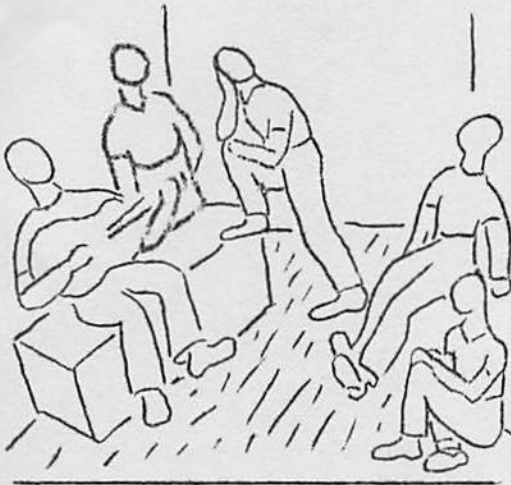
Glancing down the room filled with moving figures, I noticed a pair of newlyweds dancing the calls with smiles of confidence upon their faces. Laughingly and with knowing looks they swung with a very fast whirl which I liked so much. The peculiar Canadian swing involved a considerable business of interlocking handclasps and low waist encirclement that gave the dancers a marvelous sense of balance and ease. While Milt limbered up his lungs with "Do-si-do your corners all, and do-si-do your partners all, allemande left and grand right and left," we limbered up our legs and gave the shoe leather a fine going over. I wasn't quite prepared for the little lady in the second frame who almost swung me into the next set when the caller laid the bars down with "Ladies lead out to the right of the ring, give him a turn and give him a swing." I might add that I looked both disturbed and ridiculous as I sailed across the floor in typical "gay nineties" saloon-exit style.

Anyway I resolved as I left the hall that night to get myself flung around in more of the lively Canadian square dances. To say that I liked it is putting the case mildly. It's good for what ails a person.

R.B.Tefferteller

DISCS

"THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL"



The new Victor release entitled "Midnight Special" is one of the most exciting albums of folk songs which has been presented in many a long moon! The songs are from the South, prison songs and work songs, and are sung by Huddie Ledbetter (known in the folk field as "Leadbelly"), assisted by the Golden Gate Quartet.

This is primitive, down to earth stuff, real music sung in an unaffected simple manner. There is rhythm, and harmony too, but never does the presentation become stilted or sound rehearsed.

It is this spontaneity which causes the listener to feel as if he is sitting right there with the singers. You can almost feel the hot southern air, and are liable to start slapping at mosquitos. Some of the records use Mr. Ledbetter's twelve string guitar as an accompaniment and others have the voices alone. The songs recorded in this album, #P50, are: "Ham and Eggs", "The Grey Goose", "The Midnight Special", "Pick a Bale of Cotton", "Alabama Bound", and "Stewball".

"TWO CENTURIES OF AMERICAN FOLK SONGS"

Since we have great faith in Elie Siegmeister and his American Ballad Singers, we awaited this album of American folk songs with great expectations. This is another Victor release, #P41, and this collection of songs attempts to blanket the history of American folk song, the title of the album tells you as much! The volume includes such favorites as: "Poor Wayfaring Stranger", "Springfield Mountain", "The Deaf Woman's Courtship", "Cotton Picking Song", "Upon de Mountain", "Kentucky Moonshiner", "Grandma Grunts", "Pat Works on the Railway", and "Go to Sleepy".

In order to really judge these recordings, one must decide for himself just what he expects from "folk recordings". If arrangements of folk songs, with elaborate harmonizations and vocal displays, are acceptable as folk songs, then this album will undoubtedly please you.

However, it seems to us that these songs, as presented by the American Ballad Singers, are no longer in the folk category, but rather in the realm of "art songs". Folk songs, in our humble opinion, should be presented simply and unadorned. Just as folk dances, when arranged for stage presentation lose their folk quality, so also, folk songs, set in such musical backgrounds that only trained singers can sing them, are no longer the songs of the people.

We sincerely hope that the American Ballad Singers will clear up these points for us. What do they consider folk songs? It may well be that our definition of folk song does not jibe with theirs, but the way matters stand we have no choice but to say that we are disappointed in this album.

We earnestly invite a reply from Elie Siegmeister!

BOOK REVIEWS

This is by way of confession and it is horribly embarrassing! All these many months I have been laboring under the impression -- now clearly a delusion -- that Jean Thomas' autobiography "The Sun Shines Bright" and the Downes-Siegmester song-book "A Treasury of American Songs" had both been brilliantly and constructively reviewed in the December issue of "Promenade"!

The obvious retort is "Read Promenade" -- but, no doubt, you know the old saying about not seeing the forest for the trees...and in this case, I reckon that I've spent so many hours working on "Promenade" that I've never had time to really read it! In the future I'll make sure to hand in book reviews and not merely keep them in a folder.

The Sun Shines Bright

(by Jean Thomas, published by Prentice-Hall, 1940)

This is the autobiography of a southern gal who just wouldn't sit back and resignedly accept the dullness and monotony of the life open to the "poor working girl" of the early twentieth century. Instead Miss Thomas created quite a scandal in her Kentucky home town by taking up a business course including short-hand and typing. After a varied and somewhat hectic career in private business, Miss Thomas became a court stenographer, and through her many trips in the mountains of Kentucky she became so interested in the people and their customs that she has since devoted her life to the preservation of Kentucky folk culture.

This book is by far the frankest and most pleasant reading of all of Jean Thomas' books (if memory serves, this is the eighth or ninth book she has written). The book is designed for 'just reading'; if you are primarily interested in her folk songs and other folk collections, you will have to go to her earlier works. "The Sun Shines Bright", however, gives a clear picture of the life of the people of the mountains and the small towns. It tells of the struggles of this woman who loves her people and their traditions and who has done so much to record and keep intact their precious inheritance before the outside commercial world moves in and takes over completely.

Jean Thomas is the organizer and founder of the American Folk Song Society which presents an annual folk festival on the second Sunday in June. The festival, which draws folks from miles around to join in the singing of the old songs and ballads, is held on the Mayo Trail, a few miles out of Ashland, Kentucky.

A Treasury of American Song

(by Olin Downes and Elsie Siegmester, pub. Howell, Soskin Co.)

Here indeed is a treasury of American folk song! Here is a rich variety of songs, here is a tremendous range of musical folk America! The book is divided into sixteen sections along, more or less, geographical and chronological lines, although for obvious reasons, such divisions are necessarily rough. The first section is called "Plymouth Rock to Bunker Hill" and the last "Broadway to Route 66" -- which will give you an idea of the scope of the material in this book.

The introductory chapters are particularly fine for they give the clearest and about the finest interpretation of American folk song that I have seen. The remarks which head each chapter as well as the special notes on each song are invaluable to the student of folk song. While the choice and arrangements of the songs are a matter for individual discrimination, the book, in our opinion, contains some of the most representative and surely some of the most beautiful American folk songs that this country possesses.

NOTES OF INTEREST

Have you seen the new magazine "Your Sport"? It is published quarterly and offers a wealth of information about all the different sports, including a notice about The American Square-Dance Group. It tells you where to go to find your favorite sports in and around the city, and it has excellent articles by experts about everything from flying to rifle clubs. The photography is particularly worthy of comment.

Members of the demonstration group of the American Square-Dance Group appeared recently at the Stockholm Restaurant at Somerville, N.J.

This is an unusual and charming restaurant, serving not only excellent Swedish food and good drinks, but also featuring folk dancing of different nationalities each Saturday night.



Margot had the pleasure and the honor of "guest teaching" at the Hanya Holm School of the Dance, during the past month as part of the plan at that school of presenting to the students many different aspects of the dance. We hope that this kind of interchanging of ideas and methods between groups and schools will occur more frequently in the future, for it is important that those dealing with the various arts keep in touch with each other. We believe this to be true not only for dancers, but for all who are interested in the many art forms.

SPECIAL NOTE

Since Alan, who acts more or less as coordinator of production for Promenade, has of late been occupied with the extremely mundane matter of earning a living and, as an unfortunate consequence, has not been able to devote much time to this publication. We have had to struggle along as best we could without his valuable aid. We beg forgiveness for all the mistakes that we are sure we have made! But then, we hope to learn by our errors...

